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PACIFIC COAST PENSIONERS ASSOCIATION ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
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JOHN CORDOCEDO OF ILWU LOCAL 500, PCPA

INTERVIEWEE: JOHN CORDOCEDO

INTERVIEWER: HARVEY SCHWARTZ, RON MAGDEN, CONOR CASEY

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[00:00:00] **HARVEY SCHWARTZ:** Also, Conor Casey is our camera guy today, and he's always been very helpful to all of us in trying to do our oral history project for the PCPA.

John, can you tell me when you were born and where you were born?

[00:00:21] **JOHN CORDOCEDO:** I was born in the year 1933, March 3—and March is also the third month of the year—and you can question my mother's honor, but she said it was around 3:00 in the morning, too, when I was born. And I've never won a thing with threes. [laughter] The horses I've bet and the rest of it still doesn't work.

[00:00:54] **HARVEY:** Where were you born?

[00:00:57] **JOHN:** I was born in North Vancouver, but the name comes from my grandfather [who] jumped ship. He was from Chile, and he jumped ship in BC And he was was a longshoreman on the Vancouver Island at one time, and he married my grandmother, who was a First Nations Squamish princess, and they raised a family. I think you're all familiar with the Lions Gate Bridge?

[00:01:27] **HARVEY:** Yes.

[00:01:28] **JOHN:** Well, my dad was born just east, right at the footing of the bridge there. There was a slough called Cordocedo Slough, and that's where he was born. My dad was a longshoreman, too, till he had an unfortunate accident and lost his leg, so he never recovered to go back to longshoring.

[00:01:48] **HARVEY:** Take me back. How many other Chilean families?

[00:01:52] **JOHN:** Oh, there's a multi, multi, multi that integrated with the Squamish Nation up there, and also the white community, too.

[00:02:04] **RON MAGDEN:** They were in Seattle and Tacoma, too, the Chileans.

[00:02:08] **JOHN:** Well, this was told to me. This is secondhand, again, is that when they depleted the fur trade in the Columbia River area, they moved north, up into the Fraser River there for the harvest of the fur-bearing animals. And, as a result, some of the supervisors, which they had brought from Hawaii—the Sandwich Island people—were all managing the Natives at the Columbia River—they came north, and my mother is one of the descendants of the Hawaiians, too.

Then the other side, we don't—I'm not a racist, you must understand me, but we don't broadcast the other part, My grandfather, he was Welsh. [laughter] So it's a real screwed up—you want a mixup of things, consomme soup, that's us.

[00:03:08] **HARVEY:** It's interesting. They were called Kanaka.

[00:03:11] **JOHN:** That's right, Kanakas. And there's different interpretations. I found that I have relatives right in Hawaii still, through DNA.

[00:03:26] **HARVEY:** There are still Chileans on the Seattle waterfront.

[00:03:31] **JOHN:** Oh, yeah.

[00:03:32] **HARVEY:** They go way back to the 1870s and 80s.

[00:03:37] **JOHN:** Well, those ships used to—they'd load lumber where my mother was born in British Columbia—it was called Moodyville.

[00:03:46] **HARVEY:** Yes, that's the first.

[00:03:48] **JOHN:** There was even a settlement they called Kanaka Row with all the Hawaiians living in the area. There was segregation, there's no doubt there. The people from the commonwealth lived in one area and the other people, the Kanakas, lived in another one. The [Nahus?], the Cordocedos, they were all Hawaiian descent.

[00:04:14] **HARVEY:** We only have their nicknames.

[00:04:16] **JOHN:** It's mentioned if you read that book our Pensioners put out, Man Along the Shore.

[00:04:24] **HARVEY:** Yes.

[00:04:26] **JOHN:** There's a section in there about the Kanaka Row.

[00:04:33] **HARVEY:** I've always been interested in the origin of the concept of rotation of the job, and that comes out of Moodyville; the idea that people took their turn at the work, who shared the workload.

[00:04:52] **JOHN:** I really can't help you with that. I just know what happened there when I was there, just prior to school age. I can remember going with my father down to the hiring hall on the Indian Reserve, and they were called the Bow and Arrow Gangs. That was the Squamish and they had their own—now, they didn't know anything about unions or anything like that. It was just set up by the employers. They loaded the lumber.

But then there was a vacuum there because in Vancouver Harbor—on the other side, on the south side in Vancouver proper—they had the other general cargo. But they didn't load lumber over there because the mills were all on the north shore. As a result, they finally decided that they would integrate, and they did. They shared the work. Same thing as we're doing now and this is our 50th anniversary of sharing the work right through the whole harbor.

[00:06:04] **HARVEY:** You say "they" decided to share the work. Who decided to share the work?

[00:06:08] **JOHN:** The employers. They had their own gangs. They had the lumber carriers, the lumber loaders, and they were all First Nations people.

[00:06:21] **HARVEY:** Do you have any idea why the employer decided that?

[00:06:24] **JOHN:** I guess it was straight that they'd have a shortage each way. We fought that for all my time within activity in the union, we've had that problem right through up there. It's in peaks and valleys. We'd get going and we'd have a yard full of lumber and a ship would come and take it away and then there's nothing left. You'd have to assemble the next cargo. So there was never a steady flow of cargo or ships through there. Mind you, these are sailing ships I'm talking about.

In the present stage, it's changed a lot. But now we've just changed from water transport. Never mind the containers. We've got a dock up there that's full of steel. We've got the imports in there, and that was built as a lumber dock for all the small gypo companies to ship out of there. Because there was one major company, Seaboard [Marine] shipping, up there, affiliated with General Steam in San Francisco, and you had to be a member of the mill there, and be assessed and pay. So the little gypo outfit couldn't survive. They finally did build a dock for them, but now there's no lumber moving. It's all going by containers or rail cars.

[00:07:51] **HARVEY:** But John, when they integrated—if I understand you right, to make sure the tape understands you—you think the employer decided that they didn't want to have any shortages, so that's why they'd integrate the workforce.

[00:08:08] **JOHN:** Yeah. What I understand is that the lumber carriers would load a ship, but they wouldn't allow them to go to Vancouver to do the general cargo, the bulk-rate cargo. That was it. It was segregated, the two sides. I don't know if any of the Vancouver gangs from the Port of Vancouver coming over to the north shore's work.

[00:08:37] **HARVEY:** When was this?

[00:08:39] **JOHN:** this was in the very beginning of shipping, like sailboats and that. I should qualify one thing, why I agreed—those fellows asked me to come up there—I was the president in 1965 of the Port of Vancouver and then again in 69. Nobody was stupid enough to take the job except me because we had to fire the negotiating committee. [laughter] So we went through turmoil at that time. And the last office, I was the vice president of the Canadian area.

[00:09:26] **HARVEY:** You were vice president of the Canadian area?

[00:09:28] **JOHN:** Right.

[00:09:28] **HARVEY:** That was before you retired. What year did you retire?

[00:09:31] **JOHN:** I retired in 1996. I've been retired 20 years this year.

[00:09:39] **RON:** Can I ask, do they have longshore sections in the cemetery that goes back to very early, the First Nations?

[00:09:52] **JOHN:** Yes, well, a lot of those were. That's where the lumber carriers are buried there, and that's in the mission.

[00:09:58] **RON:** Are they buried together?

[00:10:00] **JOHN:** No, no, no. Nothing like that. My grandfather, the Chilean, he's buried in North Vancouver in the First Nations—the Squamish Nations—graveyard. In fact, I went and started to clean it up. I found him. I guess [it was] 60 years before I found him.

[00:10:25] **RON:** Yeah, it's important to me. I've chased longshore graveyards, and the founders are buried in separate sections of the cemetery in Seattle, Portland, Tacoma, Port Townsend, and I was trying to track back where they got that idea. All of the ideas came from British Columbia down into Washington State, a lot of them anyway.

You know the 10 Principles of the ILWU? A lot of those originated in British Columbia. They were the first to organize. I did track, in 1922 they had an enrollment in Canada of First Nation, and that's the first list that we have of longshore by occupation, so I knew from that. In the early book, *Man Along the Shore*—that wonderful book—

[00:11:39] **JOHN:** That was all Pensioners.

[00:11:40] **RON:** Yeah. You were the one who started the idea of having books on longshore locals. Interesting. When did you get the idea of doing the book, *Man Along the Shore*? Do you know?

[00:11:57] **JOHN:** Oh, god. We'll have to order supper if we want to go into [that]. It's a long trail there, a long trail.

[00:12:05] **RON:** I'll come up and have dinner with you. [laughter]

[00:12:08] **JOHN:** At first, it was a company union, as you say. And why I agreed to come here is that I am a great advocate and admirer [of] and respect Harry Bridges, number one—I'm a socialist, too—and he taught me more [by] just listening to him my whole life. I'm 83 now. But I've sat—never kissed his ass or anything like that—but I turned around and listened to all his knowledge come out. It's unfortunate that him and Louis Goldblatt had a little bit of a fallout. But as far as Canada goes, he was just the greatest. But he couldn't get across the line, if you remember right. During McCarthyism, if he went across the line into Canada, they wouldn't let him back in the States. [laughter]

[00:13:02] **RON:** Oh, you bet! They were waiting for that.

[00:13:05] **JOHN:** It cost the membership millions of dollars to keep him out of jail, and a piece of paper that said he was the only American that wasn't a communist. [laughter] But I listened to him in Hawaii, I've listened—he came up to help us, and he supplied the Northwest [gettys?], and Bob Robinson, the vice president, has spent lots of time with us. I was just a young fellow then, in my early twenties, and they taught me a lot. I listened to them, and I didn't know anything about unions. What the hell did I know about unions?

[00:13:42] **HARVEY:** There were quite a few from Canada who migrated down the West Coast, to Seattle and to Portland. There are still quite a few Canadians by birth whom moved in to work. But the First Nations must have stayed pretty close to [British Columbia].

[00:14:09] **JOHN:** Well, there was no boundary for the First Nations. They could go freely across the border. They didn't have to carry a passport or anything. I had a first cousin, Ralph [Bend?], and he was a walking boss in Seattle. He was from the Squamish Nation in Vancouver. My brother-in-law also was working. [Stu Bombary?], a professional lacrosse player, who came west and played lacrosse up in Canada, and then he ended up down in Los Angeles, Local 13.

[00:15:06] **HARVEY:** What was it like growing up as a First Nations member? Can you describe what life was like? Did you feel discrimination? Did you feel separated from the general population? Can you give us a feel for that?

[00:15:21] **JOHN:** Harvey, you hit the nail on the head. The First Nations, what happened there was—I'm getting a little long-winded but there's no other way I can explain it—my grandmother, in her wisdom—the First Nations person—and my grandfather moved off the Reserve. There was a dispute about him. Now, mind you, him jumping ship, he had about 10 different names to stay one [step] ahead of immigration. I don't even know if there was an immigration bureaucracy at that particular time or what, but he changed his name quite a few times. And he moved off and he took the family.

Well, the standard of living came up for the whole family. It was the Cordocedos, the Silvas, the Campos and these other Chilean sailors married into the family through my aunts. They all lived in a couple houses right under the Lions Gate Bridge. But as time went on, we moved off, and the standard of living come up. My grandfather even had a gas boat. Everybody else was paddling and he had a gas boat. They did all right, and we've never looked back.

So, I was raised in a white community. How I guess I was more or less accepted, I was never that great, but I'd participate in a lot of sports. I played lacrosse and soccer and baseball and basketball, so the community accepted me.

[00:16:57] **HARVEY:** Was that part of the white community accepting you, do you think, because you were an athlete?

[00:17:01] **JOHN:** Yeah, probably. Because there's no doubt there was—in 1957, there was still on that Reserve—and it's a very wealthy band—they still had outhouses. There was poverty there still. They're doing pretty good now. I have relatives on the Reserve. I'm a non-status Indian; I have not got status. I've appealed and I've been playing around with it for 20 years. But in fact, the new government in Canada now has agreed to review my case. But it doesn't come up for three years, so I might be dead before it comes up. [laughing]

[00:17:49] **HARVEY:** What exactly are you bidding for in the case?

[00:17:51] **JOHN:** Well, status. Status just gives me the opportunity [to] get accepted by the band again, number one. They have a vote on it. Number two, you don't pay tax on certain things, like bank interest. If the bank is on the Indian Reserve. The only reason I even pursued this is I have a brother that's been in ill health, and he's had a colostomy and he's a diabetic, and he's going broke. Even with our national health plan up there, he's gradually going to go broke if we don't do something. So if I could get status, he would get status, and then he'd get free medical from the Federal government, because it's under the Indian Act, Department of Northern Affairs and Indian Department.

[00:18:48] **HARVEY:** So all these years, you're still trying to get things set up.

[00:18:52] **JOHN:** Yeah, yeah. All my family—I wonder if it isn't sometime politics. Harvey, I've really got to be true about that. Because the rest of my relatives are all in. My family is the only one that's not in. And a Member of Parliament said, "You're right. But the law's an ass and we can't do a thing about it."

[00:19:16] **HARVEY:** But how can you be not in, with your background?

[00:19:20] **JOHN:** Yeah, I don't know. That's it. It's just too squabbly. They won't give me a card. If I got a status card, I get gas wholesale and groceries wholesale, a few things. But I'm not about to move onto the Reserve because I have had a meeting with the elders in the band, the tribal band, and they swore out an affidavit that I am an Indian. But I made a vow to them, too. If there was any financial gain, I didn't need it. My union's been good to me. I'm not rich or any of that, but I live comfortable, and if I got any financial gain, I would give it to the elders. They're talking about an extended-care hospital on the Reserve, so they could have it.

[00:20:16] **HARVEY:** They're still financially hurting as a group?

[00:20:19] **JOHN:** No, they've got property. They're rich. In fact, there's too much. There are some fingers in the pie now, I think. [laughing]

[00:20:34] **HARVEY:** Sometimes life comes to that. Did you go to high school?

[00:20:42] **JOHN:** Yes, I went to high school. But, you know, they turn around and I was too smart for school, so I quit in grade 11. Actually, I went away on an Army course, and by the time I got back, I just went back to school. I was away for three weeks back in Wainwright taking some winter indoctrination course. And I came back to school—I just went back to school till the principal caught me and expelled me. [laughing] So that was enough. I wanted to go to work anyway.

[00:21:22] **HARVEY:** Were you in the Army at that point?

[00:21:27] **JOHN:** Yeah, that's another can of worms, because you open that up is we've got six credits for taking a cadet's course in high school. But the stipulation was you had to join the Reserve Army, so they had us as cadets in the Reserve Army. Then they took us on this course to become second officers. If you stayed in there, they would put you through school and all the rest, pay and everything, board you out. But then—I've got to be very diplomatic about this—the Korean War broke out. Well, I didn't want to shoot. I wasn't mad at those Koreans or anything, so I quit. [laughing] And I quit school, too, and went to work.

[00:22:12] **HARVEY:** But you could get out of the cadet program without being [unintelligible] by the Army?

[00:22:19] **JOHN:** That's it. I quit everything. I didn't sign up for another two years once my term was up.

[00:22:25] **HARVEY:** Sometimes, in the United States, once you're involved in the Army, you're not getting out.

[00:22:30] **JOHN:** That's right. No, we were allowed to get out.

[00:22:35] **HARVEY:** What did you do then? Did you go on the waterfront at that time or do other work?

[00:22:40] **JOHN:** My dad was a fisherman, so I was also a fisherman and a longshoreman, and there were lots of them up there. The First Nations would longshore in the wintertime, and when the salmon returned, they would all go commercial fishing. And my dad was the same. I followed in his footsteps for a bit, but I worked in logging camps and fish boats. Funny thing, that's how I ended up longshoring because I was involved in the ILWU strike and I knew nothing about unions.

[00:23:13] **HARVEY:** You were involved in an ILWU strike?

[00:23:14] **JOHN:** Yeah, in Everett. On Vancouver Island, there was an ILWU strike and they shut the whole island down, the woods products. And I had been living with my sister over there, and she couldn't afford to support me when I had no income, so I came home to Vancouver.

I got home and this friend of mine, his dad had a gang on the waterfront, one of the Bow and Arrow Gangs, and he said, "They're looking for boom men." And I had worked on a boom. That's what I did for the logging camp, too. He said, "Why don't you go to the hall?" So I went over to the hall, and lo and behold, I was there for 44 years. I should have never went near the hall. [laughter]

[00:24:03] **HARVEY:** What year was it that you went to the hall?

[00:24:05] **JOHN:** I went to the hall in June 1952, and stayed there at full employment, through many strikes—we've had many strikes up there. But Harry advised us and got us—I guess the key to success—just getting off that subject for a minute—just in Harry's wisdom, he told me straight—and this is right from his words, and God can strike me dead if I'm a fibber—but he said, "You know, it will never happen again. They will never strike our union. They'll never break our union again."

What happened in Canada was that they didn't organize the supervisors, and they had enough supervisory capacity to keep the operations going.

[00:24:53] **HARVEY:** This was in 35?

[00:24:54] **JOHN:** Yeah, that's exactly what happened.

[00:24:58] **RON:** Then that was sort of parallel with the ILWU in Washington and Oregon and California that they organized the foremen. And it went up for a final Federal decision, and the decision was to let the foremen vote where they wanted to go, and they voted solidly to go into the ILWU. That was happening also in Canada, wasn't it?

[00:25:33] **JOHN:** Well, I had to be nice to a lot of people that I detested to get them to join the 514. That's the foremen's local up there, and some people put a lot of energy into that. But we did get the ones that were strikebreakers even; put them into the foremen's local. It worked out fine, and the exchange was that the longshore workforce would let them go and become a foreman once, and then if they didn't like the job, they could make one move back into the local. A freebie. I hear there's a bit of a dispute going on now, but there was a referendum on that, and that was Harry.

[00:26:23] **RON:** Did you have good relations for the longshoremen on Vancouver Island?

[00:26:33] **JOHN:** Oh, yeah. Well, as a Canadian area rep, as a vice president, I was the collective agreement administrator for the union. So I had to travel right up to Alaska. I had supper last night for the Alaska [rep], because I traveled the Prince River right down to the border. That jurisdiction on the island—

[00:26:57] **HARVEY:** Is the longshore workforce growing in Canada?

[00:27:02] **JOHN:** No, automation is coming there like crazy. Again, we go back to Harry again. He was way ahead of the average person in seeing that technological change, and that M&M fund, you know, I retired, I think I got \$25,000, but nowadays, we're in the hundred thousands with the M&M fund.

[00:27:29] **RON:** And not replacing you. Did they replace you?

[00:27:33] **JOHN:** No, the workforce has gone down. I think the local up there in Vancouver is about 1,200 to 1,300, and we used to carry 1,500. So it's gone down a bit, but it's a bonanza right now. Things are going fantastic up there.

[00:27:56] **RON:** It was big in 1915, the longshore workforce in British Columbia. In the early days of handling, the grain coming out of the prairie states. I remember reading where there were 1,000, the called them "cereal workers," who were handling grain and flour, in Vancouver. Did that die? Must have.

[00:28:27] **JOHN:** Oh, yeah. The shipping companies changed. They did away with the wings in the tween decks. The shelter deck is the top deck, tween decks, and then the lower hold. We had a local up there, Local 507, it was grain liners. This port was in competition with us, Everett and Tacoma, to build feeders. We had the lumber up there, so they would come in there. Sometimes they'd build the feeders in Vancouver and then come down and get the grain here. The feeders, all it was was making blocks in the middle of the hatch so the grain wouldn't shift.

[00:29:14] **HARVEY:** Have you had anything to do with the Youth Movement that started in Vancouver, the young people coming to get—

[00:29:22] **JOHN:** I missed that. They were here, right?

[00:29:24] **HARVEY:** Yes, they were here.

[00:29:25] **JOHN:** I really missed that. I am sorry about that, but the agenda didn't say that, and I didn't realize they were coming. But I've been retired 20 years. I'm active with the Pensioners. I'm a real pork-chopper. It ended up I was the president of the Pensioners, too, for a year.

[00:29:50] **RON:** It's a phenomenon, the young suddenly wanting to grab ahold and know their story, their history. And it started in Vancouver.

[00:30:01] **JOHN:** If we fail, in my experience on that waterfront in 40 years, and an executive—I had gotten executive in about 1963. Don't misunderstand me, now. I'm not blowing wind up you-know-where. It was just unfortunate that I was the president of the Deep Sea local. I didn't want the job, but we ended up, we were starting up an amalgamation, bringing the several locals into one. And they moved people around.

We had an International rep then. Harry said we could have it up there, and Bob Robinson and [Gettys?] set it up. Craig [Perchetta?] came and he was very good. In fact, I've heard a fact—I won't say who said it—they said if they could have got our International rep, Craig Perchetta, across the line, he'd have been the next International president. [laughter] But he couldn't get across the line going this way. So you can figure it out, add one and one and two.

[00:31:14] **HARVEY:** Right. I wanted to ask you, you come in in the 1950s, several things occur. First of all, can you describe your first day as a youngster on the waterfront?

[00:31:27] **JOHN:** Like I say, I was a boom man. I had done that, sorting logs and pulp, sawed logs from pulp logs and all that stuff up in the Nanaimo Lakes. There's three enormous lakes up there.

[00:31:46] **RON:** Yeah, there are.

[00:31:46] **HARVEY:** How do you do that work? Is that a lot of fun? What's it like?

[00:31:50] **JOHN:** They would chop the tree down in the bush. They would buck it, take all the branches off the rest of it. They usually had a main tree and a donkey, and put on straps and pull it down to the landing. This was a railway show. They'd load it onto rail cars—bunk cars. They'd bring it down to the second lake, dump it all in the water again, and we would sort it. A lot of the pulp logs used to come down here, right to Tacoma, because they had a surplus of hemlock pulp logs. With the saw logs, they were without pin nuts or anything, and fir. They depleted the whole species of Douglas fir up there.

They'd bring it down, and then they'd load it back on the rails again. As the work extended, boy, it was a great deal for worker [to] put the sorted logs back on the rail cars again, down the rest of the spur line, right down to Ladysmith, dump them in the water again, and make up booms. They got booms, and then they would tow them across to the Fraser River and store them in there because of the teredos, you see, bug-infested up there so they would leave them there every year. Then they would tow them back to the island and use them again or sell them, whatever they had to do with them. But they kept them in the freshwater so they could keep the teredos out of them.

[00:33:28] **HARVEY:** Were you yourself doing that kind of work?

[00:33:30] **JOHN:** That's what I was doing.

[00:33:30] **HARVEY:** How do you do that kind of work right on the water? Can you describe what that's like, what tools you use?

[00:33:35] **JOHN:** You use caulk shoes and a pike pole , and that's all you did. I fell in the water; I did as much swimming as standing on the logs. [laughter] But you learn that. But I had worked on the tugboats prior to that. In fact, I did run a tugboat for a period of time. So I had bit of experience, but I wasn't a great trapeze artist or something. My balance was adequate, I guess average.

[00:34:09] **HARVEY:** Is it dangerous?

[00:34:11] **JOHN:** No, no. You're supposed to wear a safety device, a lifebelt. We used to have things that strapped on just like I have a money belt on right now; strapped on there, and in the event you fell in, you'd press the capsule and it inflated it.

[00:34:30] **HARVEY:** That helped, yeah.

[00:34:31] **JOHN:** It was very cumbersome if you had a big lifejacket on.

[00:34:38] **HARVEY:** You come in in the 50s. There's a big strike in 1958.

[00:34:43] **JOHN:** I was involved.

[00:34:45] **HARVEY:** Tell us what you did during that strike.

[00:34:50] **JOHN:** In 58, my eldest daughter was born, and we do on strike. I have a wife now, and my daughter, and we survived by the local, with the help of the International. They turned around and assisted us and we set up even—just like down here, the American locals were way ahead in that we put a store up, and hustled vegetables from the farms and the Fraser Valley and the rest of it, and we kept everybody fed. And we had a committee trying to appease the mortgage companies and the rest of it. We followed the path that was already set down here, so we just went through it. It was a successful strike, about 30 days or something like that.

[00:35:40] **HARVEY:** I gather that pensions were gained, and eight-hour days.

[00:35:42] **JOHN:** That's right, the pensions.

[00:35:48] **HARVEY:** In your experience, did that change the way the workers looked at the union, that strike?

[00:35:54] **JOHN:** Well, at that strike—I might as well be blunt about it—the administration was made of people that were involved in defeating the union during the 35 strike. Now, I can't tell you if a guy didn't like another longshoreman, he'd say he's a scab. I wasn't there. I don't know if the guy had 10 kids or if he was a scab. I can't make an opinion about another person like that. But they were all—myself, I think I was about 26—we decided that we wanted to have—our business agent never left the office. He sat in the office. And our union office was in the employer's building. They had access to all our files. [laughter] The craziest setup you've ever seen in your life. But anyway, that was a broken union.

Finally, Roy Smith—a very prominent person—came back from the war and he was a longshoreman, and he was maybe a year or something ahead of me—it would be 51—and we decided to run him. He made sense. They called him "Hamburger Smith," and he'd always give you the finger [points with his right pinky finger]. And he ran for president as a paid president. The other people that started in 35, two of them ran against him for a dollar a year. They would try to break you, you see. We only won by a few votes, the younger fellows. We all voted, and that was the start of the regime.

[00:37:52] **HARVEY:** Is this after the strike in 58 or before?

[00:37:55] **JOHN:** No, this is before. That's why the strike was over was with the union and employers, and the employers seen the problem with that. They didn't want to see the leadership change either.

[00:38:07] **HARVEY:** So Smith gets in before the strike occurs.

[00:38:09] **JOHN:** Yeah, he's the one. He walked out of the dispatch and they're dispatching and he says, "Forget the dispatch. We're on strike." [laughter] And this Captain McKee—he was head of the Shipping Federation at that particular time—he just about fell off his chair. He'd never heard anything like that in his life. [laughter] So we walk over there, and they're printing up signs and went and shut the whole port down.

[00:38:40] **HARVEY:** The way I'd heard it, the changeover from the old company union to a real union occurs at this point in time.

[00:38:47] **JOHN:** Exactly, that's right. It's going to happen again now the younger members took over.

[00:38:55] **HARVEY:** Are you getting involved at this point yourself? It sounds like you're a young person but you're kind of getting involved in this situation, or not at this point?

[00:39:04] **JOHN:** Well, Harvey, this is not for publication. It took us starting in 58 to come up with a basic rate with longshore first on the ships, and then we started in amalgamation, and the goal was to bring parity within the whole industry, and the parity be that all the warehousemen, portsmen, everybody made the same rate to start off with. Now, putting that all together was a hell of a job, especially with all these different employers. So we finally got a master contract and the whole thing and forced them all at the same rate.

[00:39:51] **HARVEY:** When was this?

[00:39:52] **JOHN:** This would be in 1963, the year of parity, I think.

[00:39:57] **HARVEY:** Pensions for all, yeah.

[00:39:58] **JOHN:** Yeah, pensions and the base rate. The base rate, everybody came—the deep sea local, we could have signed an agreement that gave us 70 cents an hour increase. We dropped it down and took 30 or 40 cents, but we brought the warehousemen—all the others, the low-wage earners—up to the same parity as we had. Then we shared all the work. There was different workforces here—there was one in coastwise, there was one in warehouse—and the allegation is that we, the deep sea longshoremen on the ships, seen what was coming in the future and the work was moving off the ship into the assembly of cargos on the dock. And it's true, that was part of it.

[00:40:58] **HARVEY:** I had a note that there was a call in 63 for pensions for all, including the people who had worked in 1935 during that strike.

[00:41:08] **JOHN:** That's right.

[00:41:09] **HARVEY:** Were you involved in that? How did that come to be?

[00:41:12] **JOHN:** No, I didn't get involved till 63 on just a whim. I run for executive and I made it. I've held various offices. I was never on the money part. I stayed out of the financial end. [laughing] But as far as organizing and the other things, I was the vice president a few years, too, because at that particular time, we

were just educating. If a person knew what he was doing—to run a meeting or the rest of it—you'd pass it on. There was no animosity.

[00:42:01] **HARVEY:** You mentioned the role of Bridges. Did you have any opinion yourself when the move for autonomy came in 1959? How did Harry handle that? In what way was he involved in that, if he was?

[00:42:17] **JOHN:** I'm trying to think of that year. He came up there and they booed him because he had thrown the American contract across the table to the employers, and they just about died. [laughing] They would have no part of it. And Harry came to the meeting. I can't remember. I was trying to really think about what the arguments [were], but there were still a lot of those active people that were company unionists in the organization. You had to take the whole works. How are you half-pregnant? You have to take the workforce.

[00:42:59] **HARVEY:** Who booed him? The people who had been scabs in 35?

[00:43:04] **JOHN:** Yeah, probably. They were losing control. They were losing control, that's why. But Harry had figured this out already. He figured out what we should do, and the same thing as amalgamation, I'll guarantee you that that idea come from our International rep, [Craig Perchetta?]. But if you really think about it, I betcha Harry put that seed in his head. He was way ahead of this time. Way ahead.

[00:43:35] **HARVEY:** You were on the executive board by now. What was the advantage of the consolidation, from your perspective? How did you see it yourself?

[00:43:45] **JOHN:** Night and day.

[00:43:46] **HARVEY:** How so?

[00:43:52] **JOHN:** There was five different locals. They had five casual workforces. They weren't making a living, and some of our locals weren't making a living. So we put the work all together, and combined the casual workforce into one pool, everybody made a living. It was just simple logic. And the pensions was a can of worms. Our economist up in Canada was also a left-winger, Dr. [Emil Bojonason?], and he said—that's why I'm here today. I'm enjoying retirement through his efforts. Harry always was the leader, but he had a lot of backup people, and Emil was one of them.

[00:44:44] **HARVEY:** For the record, it's 1966.

[00:44:47] **JOHN:** Yeah. They burnt me out in 65. I didn't run in 66. My term came up, and the next year, all the presidents went to jail. They said, "You phony bastards." I was smart enough I didn't go to jail! [laughter]

[00:45:10] **HARVEY:** Did you run?

[00:45:11] **JOHN:** No, I didn't run that year. I sat down with the incoming president and gave him everything I had, all the records and everything, and what I could advise him on. Because I was burnt out. We had a thousand meetings, and everybody's trying to protect their job, and you've got eight different locals, or seven, everybody wants—and then we had reps on each. We had an executive committee of 23, I think. How do you get anything done with 23 people? You can't. But we got through it.

[00:45:50] **HARVEY:** When the situation occurs in 66—Roy Smith and the nine local presidents all go to jail—what were you doing at that time? What was your role? You're not in office, but what was your role anyway?

[00:46:07] **JOHN:** I was just out working. I think I went with the Foreman's local somewhere in 1969 or 70. I did transfer into a Foreman's local. I was a foreman for 14 months, and that wasn't my bag, so I quit and went back into the workforce.

[00:46:29] **HARVEY:** How come? Why wasn't it your bag?

[00:46:32] **JOHN:** Well, I tell you, the company treated me fine. But I was traveling too much and I had a young family. I was over at Vancouver Island—Nanaimo, Port Alberni, Prince Rupert—and I'd be gone away, living out of a hotel. And I tell you, there would be two ships and two foreman, and there's only one cocktail waitress and they all got to looking the same way. So I figured I'd stay and work. [laughter] I used to do double shifts!

[00:47:18] **RON:** In the structure, I know they lost control of the hiring hall in Canada. Can you tell us a little bit about that?

[00:47:37] **JOHN:** That's the one thing that the International—Harry wasn't happy with it either. Because we had the company dispatch, and we still have today. Harry [unintelligible] hiring hall, and I listened to them downstairs this week, and they're right. They're right. The hiring hall should be there. But we've had that on the computer dispatch since 1969. We're supposed to enter into discussions with the employer to implement the computer dispatch, and we've done every—we would negotiate it away about three times, we stalled them and everything else to keep it away, and now it's semi-computerized now. But it is true, it changes the organization. The fraternalship is not there, the fellowship is not there, you know, with the guys going to the hall. They would like us one day to change that.

But I bought—when I say "I," I happened to be the president—and I brought Joe Moseley up from San Francisco to look at the dispatch. We were talking about is there some way we could actually implement the computer dispatch and protect the membership at the same time. So, Joe came up. I knew him from 'Frisco and the caucuses and the rest of it down there. He had a look at it, and he looked at that for two days. He was a deep thinker, old Moseley, and he said, "I don't think it's not—it's just as fair as your company dispatch. It's a union dispatch, you know." I'm not saying—I never worked down in the States, but they have their problems, too, I know that, nepotism and the rest of it and everything going on there. But he said it's a pretty fair thing.

[00:49:48] **HARVEY:** When was this?

[00:49:50] **JOHN:** This would be 1969, I guess.

[00:49:55] **HARVEY:** There was never any concerted effort to make an all-out effort to get—

[00:49:58] **JOHN:** Oh, yeah. We had a referendum, and the membership turned it down. We had a referendum right in the computer, but that wasn't—it's very complicated, because there's an allocations committee. When the port is busy, they're all bidding for gangs, the stevedore companies and the agents. And who's going to finish—they want to get this ship out first, and you get so many points if you're a finishing ship and you're a returning company. They had this allocation of all this—we couldn't get the allocations. They wouldn't touch that. You can go on strike forever and they're not giving up allocations. Because they had the experience of Westminster giving it to them.

[00:50:51] **HARVEY:** When was this referendum, do you remember?

[00:50:54] **JOHN:** I think that was in 1967.

[00:51:03] **RON:** Is there any relationship between British Columbia and the East Coast?

[00:51:12] **JOHN:** They've had delegations out.

[00:51:13] **RON:** They have exchanged delegations?

[00:51:15] **JOHN:** And we went back there. Now, I didn't go because I wasn't involved the executive or anything at that particular time. But they sent a bunch of people that really didn't represent the membership either, so I don't know what happened. But they went back East and had a look at Montreal and the rest of it. It never came to anything. That's that goddamn Ports Canada, you know. Back there, the Federal government is . . .

[00:51:45] **RON:** . . . very deep.

[00:51:46] **JOHN:** Yeah. The jurisdiction back there for the longshore is under the Canada Shipping Act. That's where a captain can turn around and put you under articles. He can hang you from the yardarm if he wants to. [laughter] The Canada Shipping Act is unique in that we were covered by the Workman's Compensation Board. These locals down here always wanted to get the Workman's Compensation Board the same as we got up there, but the shipping companies would pay the assessment to the Compensation Board, but the Compensation Board could not come on the docks or the ships. We had government tackle inspectors up there that come there. So, it worked. It was to our advantage at times.

[00:52:50] **RON:** Do you think the future of longshoring is right up there now, with Prince Rupert and the coming of trans-Canadian traffic?

[00:53:01] **JOHN:** I don't want to get in trouble with these locals down here.

[00:53:04] **RON:** You don't have to.

[00:53:07] **JOHN:** I heard them talking. [Those?] downstairs, they're all pretty good about Tacoma and Seattle. And I know about King County and the [debentures?] and all. I don't know how the hell they're competing against each other but they are.

[00:53:25] **RON:** You bet.

[00:53:26] **JOHN:** But we're competing against Seattle, too, and Long Beach. We've got a shorter route from Prince Rupert.

[00:53:39] **RON:** And less taxes.

[00:53:40] **JOHN:** Right through to we can deliver a can, I've heard, from one and a half to two days quicker from Prince Rupert to Chicago, to the Midwest, than they can up there. I think the government has just about double tracked that from Prince Rupert out to Terrace now, to the mainline. So there's going to be something else cropping up here. I don't know how the union is going to handle it. And the law is against us. The government is making sure we couldn't just say we're all going to be one local on the coast.

[00:54:19] **CONOR CASEY:** How do they do that?

[00:54:20] **JOHN:** I don't know.

[00:54:27] **RON:** The Federal government is stronger than the Provincial government. The Contract of 1837, the power where we tried to keep it divided between State and Federal, in Canada the Federal always had the edge, according to their Constitution. But we certainly do worry about Canada as a competitor. In 1900, it took 68 hours to go to Chicago from Tacoma. It now takes 66 hours. In 100 years, they've improved it by two hours.

[00:55:14] **JOHN:** Is that right?

[00:55:15] **RON:** That's right. And, of course, the whole emphasis of the Puget Sound region here is to get the goddamn railroad to cut off that time. It should be much quicker, but the railroad doesn't see that business as their big business, they see the Atlantic seaboard. So they just don't even pay attention to the requests for closer time. It went from 118 to 110 hours from Tacoma to New York City. So, you see, there's very little improvement. But in Canada, that rail, they have really improved it. They got a tax advantage, all this. They should be coming on strong.

[00:56:09] **JOHN:** Well, it is, but we don't see, what's changed is there's a change up there right now. When we say "we," the longshoremen up there would load ships that were capable of carrying 24 million board feet of lumber. Twenty-four million! You go buy the 2 X 4, it costs you five dollars, and you've got 24 million on there. That ship would go down, and some of them, if they were going to Europe, they would put the deckload on at Vancouver, go down through the Canal, go up the East Coast, dump the deckload off, and then go across the Atlantic. So it was a very lucrative business at that time. That whole market is gone. There's a little dribble of it. All the lumber is going into the containers now and you just don't see it.

[00:57:10] **RON:** Even the logs.

[00:57:10] **JOHN:** That's right! They're even putting logs in containers. But I think there's a conspiracy there.

[00:57:16] **RON:** I think so, too.

[00:57:18] **JOHN:** I think those cans that they're using is probably their last trip, because they all tire in the corners from—they start to get cracks and the rest of it.

[00:57:24] **RON:** Yeah, yeah. They look terrible.

[00:57:28] **JOHN:** They're going to probably put those containers, after they get the logs out, in the container graveyard. They're all over the world. They were used in Vancouver as an empty container storage. The government finally put its foot down. We didn't have room for the incoming cargo.

[00:57:58] **RON:** With the coming of Alberni and Rupert, is there a move away—is the City of Vancouver, the Port of Vancouver, going to lose business, do you think, so the other ports, or do you think it can maintain itself?

[00:58:22] **JOHN:** That's a tough one. I'm really not an expert on that. We just [wrote?] capacity, and there's politics involved. I've got nothing against tree-huggers and that, but there should be a shipyard when they're building a park. There should be a dock where they built a hotel. And they're doing the same thing now. I look at 'Frisco now, last time I was in San Francisco, and they're doing the same damn things as they do in Vancouver. And that doesn't make sense. The tax base is not going to survive.

[00:58:58] **RON:** We call that gentrification, a big word for complete—it's the developers taking over the city councils, who order the big condos and that kind of thing. Tacoma is facing that now. Vancouver, though, is one of the richest cities in the world.

[00:59:36] **JOHN:** Well, the guy I just worked with—I'll give you an example of that that's very true up there—I don't know where the people are going to live. We can't go up the mountain much higher because we can't get a gravity feed for the water then. It's halfway up the ski run. [laughing] But a friend of mine, another fellow longshoreman—he's an ex-officer of the union—and he just sold his house just up from me four houses away—a little old house, it's got to be older than mine and mine is over 50 years old—for \$1.8 million.

[01:00:22] **HARVEY:** Oh my god.

[01:00:23] **JOHN:** \$1.8 million. But he had to buy another house. Then he ended up with \$300,000, I think, to [unintelligible]. By the time he bought half a duplex, that cost him \$1.5 million. But it was better than going into a strata title or something like that. He thought he did great until he ended up, I guess, at the end. I'm in the same situation. Mind you, I have my youngest daughter, she's in her fifties and my grandson are still there living with me. But I can't sell either. I should move down here.

[01:01:07] **HARVEY:** I've got a question. The 1970s, 1980s through 1996 [when] you retired, what high points were there? You mentioned there had been several strikes along the way. Can you point out one illustrative strike or situation in the 70s and the 80s in the early 90s there before you retired? We got a lot of the important stuff through 69. What impacted you, what were you involved in? What kind of strikes occurred? How did you survive during the strikes.

[01:01:41] **JOHN:** I think the main argument then was the parity, getting everybody up to the same rate. That was the hardest one there. There was two collective agreements. On one hand was the Shipping Federation that run the ships itself, and most of the the parent company of that was from San Francisco, General Steam and the rest of them. There was only about that much owned by the Canadians. They'd say it was a Canadian outfit. It isn't. But what do we care as long as the work was there?

[01:02:18] **HARVEY:** Was there a strike over that, and when was this occurring?

[01:02:21] **JOHN:** No, there wasn't a strike over that. I'm trying to think exactly now. You're testing my mind. I'm 83 years old now, and it come and it goes.

[01:02:31] **RON:** Welcome to the fold.

[01:02:33] **JOHN:** That's right. [laughter]

[01:02:35] **HARVEY:** Everybody here is 83 except for Conor. He's 12.

[01:02:42] **JOHN:** But there were various issues. Jurisdiction was one of the main things. I don't know how it operates here, I don't know the American—I've been 20 years away from the industry, retired, and I've never gone down to the docks again. [laughing] They put the security up there so bad that I'm not going to go and get somebody's ass to get down on the docks.

[01:03:03] **HARVEY:** Sure. What would the jurisdiction be if you're thinking about it, and approximately what year?

[01:03:09] **JOHN:** That was like Squamish, we all just about went to jail. I was on contempt of court.

[01:03:17] **HARVEY:** You went to jail?

[01:03:18] **JOHN:** No, I didn't go to jail. The next year, I burnt out, and then the next year Les Copan went to jail. My replacement! [laughter] Copan was the heir apparent. I was the president in 65, he was in 66. They

were all up on the contempt of court and the Federal government gave them—that was over stat holidays. That was over statutory holidays. That was the foreman that come out on that, and that's when we went down on that one.

[01:03:52] **HARVEY:** That was a big deal. How did you support those guys yourself?

[01:03:56] **JOHN:** Myself?

[01:03:57] **HARVEY:** Yeah, what were you doing?

[01:04:00] **JOHN:** What do you mean?

[01:04:00] **HARVEY:** I mean, it was such a big deal and such an uproar of that, and that's kind of one of the pivotal events in the whole Canadian history. What I'm asking is, were you active in some way to support this?

[01:04:13] **JOHN:** Oh, yeah, we were all active. We had to be.

[01:04:16] **HARVEY:** What did you do?

[01:04:17] **JOHN:** Well, we picketed. We had the pickets going. I ran the north shore, North Vancouver. On the other side there was boat plants and the grain elevators and the rest of it, and I had a man make sure everybody was there. We had to run a lot of discipline, and keeping and feeding people. And then we weren't broke, we had some assets, and after 30 days, Harry's rule come in. Harry always said, "You look after yourself for 30 days if we're going on strike, or don't vote for a strike." That's right, just simple economics. And that's so you would have some people that were screw-ups that would end up the first Friday there was supposed to be a paycheck, they're looking for a handout. We distributed the money there, but . . .

[01:05:08] **HARVEY:** You got that from the International?

[01:05:09] **JOHN:** No, no. Well, we always settled that strike just before the International come in, because the International always—this is the understanding I had—that they would assist us after 30 days, but you had to carry the first 30 days in the strike.

[01:05:27] **RON:** Right, right.

[01:05:27] **JOHN:** And we always kept enough funds in the welfare plan and the rest of it to carry us for 60 days in the event of a strike. So the employers weren't that bad, but the government, you've got to understand, Harvey, it's a very different—well, it's not different in here really, but the government had to stick their nose in every goddamn time. If we could have rassed the employers ourselves, we'd have been fine, but it was two against one.

[01:05:55] **HARVEY:** Yeah.

[01:05:55] **RON:** It didn't really matter who was running it, the Federal government did it.

[01:06:00] **JOHN:** That's right. [laughing]

[01:06:03] **HARVEY:** Did you have to deal with the Mounties and confront them or anything at that time?

[01:06:07] **JOHN:** Oh. A short story.

[01:06:08] **HARVEY:** Please.

[01:06:08] **JOHN:** We were in negotiations and the injunctive come in, and there was a subpoena out for me. I was the president in Vancouver in 69. And I talked to the lawyer—we had a very competent lawyer—and he said, “Why don’t you get out of town for a while?” I said, “That’s a good idea. I think I will.” So I packed the kids up and away we went, and we drove to Prince Rupert. I chartered a plane. I had a sister lived on an island, Porcher Island, down 25 miles south, way out in the boonies. We were out there and we stayed there for about three weeks. The heat’s off now, and I didn’t care if they wanted to arrest me, that’s fine. We come down and I figured it would just blow over. Every time you can stall, usually time heals.

So we come down. I come home, drove from Prince Rupert right down to Vancouver. They served me in 40 minutes. So never mind the FBI or anything down in the States, they’ve got CSIS [Canadian Security Intelligence Service] up in [Canada]. And I wondered, I wasn’t a little wheel in a big keg. I’m just a little guy in there, but they must have been watching, or one of my neighbors was a stool pigeon.

[01:07:48] **HARVEY:** What happened then?

[01:07:49] **JOHN:** Oh, I got the contempt of court. They censured us. I got off; they couldn’t prove that I was involved. But they fined the union, and they went to contempt of court. It was over the statutory holidays, that’s what it was.

[01:08:10] **HARVEY:** Again in 69?

[01:08:11] **JOHN:** Yeah, in 69. Nim un 66, they went to jail. In 69, it was they fired the negotiating committee. In 1969, the membership recalled the whole negotiating committee—the president of the Canadian area, just like the negotiating committee down here, they would have—you know, the coast committee had fired them all. They had another ballot, and there was one stupid doughhead run by acclimation and got in. And he’s sitting here in front of the camera, figured him to be a dumbbell. [laughing] But everything was on the line there, we had everything in the pot. Everything was on the line and there was nothing I could do. They recruited me to run in there, and I’m no genius. I’ve got no magic wand or anything like that. [laughing] So I ended up with that goddamn strike, and another four votes, we finally got it through. Harry even come up there and tried to convince them but nobody would listen. They kept voting it down.

[01:09:22] **HARVEY:** What was the strike over?

[01:09:27] **JOHN:** Money.

[01:09:27] **HARVEY:** This was not over the holiday situation anymore?

[01:09:29] **JOHN:** No, no.

[01:09:30] **HARVEY:** Okay, so this was a money issue. What was the basis of an injunction?

[01:09:39] **JOHN:** Well, the employers didn’t want to shut the port down, and they lobbied the Federal government to make sure they didn’t shut the port down. The economy of the country is dependent on you.

[01:09:50] **HARVEY:** So they were trying to charge you . . .

[01:09:52] **JOHN:** . . . with contempt of court. Because we went out on strike.

[01:10:00] **HARVEY:** I got it.

[01:10:00] **JOHN:** I might have those days mixed up a bit.

[01:10:06] **HARVEY:** You know, I think 66 is the big holiday beef, and this is a money beef in 69, at least as I understand what you're saying.

[01:10:16] **JOHN:** That's right. That's right.

[01:10:19] **HARVEY:** Anything in the 70s and 80s?

[01:10:25] **RON:** Did it get quieter?

[01:10:28] **JOHN:** Well, prosperity always breeds that apathy, doesn't it? That's exactly what happened. They got work, and boy, they never looked back. And in my opinion, that's exactly what's going on today.

[01:10:45] **HARVEY:** Have you been active in the Pensioners all along?

[01:10:48] **JOHN:** Yes, I go to all the meetings. The president was ill and quit, had to be replaced, so they delegated me for one more year. I took it for one year. I came down here—it was in Portland, I think, or Los Angeles—and they gave us a charter for the Pensioners Club in Vancouver, in Canada, but we have no structure yet, you see. We're just in an infant stage. Then they wanted—I could see the writing on the wall there was a per capita coming—so we didn't have any money, so I had to stall them here and tell them that we couldn't join. I had to get up before the meeting and tell them we just financially can't do it. We're capable of doing the conventions, but we're the only—and we've put the seed money on Vancouver Island—Nanaimo over there—to start that club.

[01:11:55] **RON:** I've worked with that club on the memorial plaque at Ladysmith. [Unintelligible].

[01:12:11] **JOHN:** We know who it is anyway.

[01:12:12] **RON:** Bill . . . he's got Alzheimer's now.

[01:12:17] **JOHN:** Yeah.

[01:12:18] **RON:** A wonderful, very fine man. Very. They were magnificent.

[01:12:26] **JOHN:** They got the women, they got the wives in the outfit, too.

[01:12:29] **RON:** Oh, yeah.

[01:12:33] **JOHN:** All the wives are members in the Pensioners.

[01:12:33] **RON:** Probably 75 at least of them.

[01:12:36] **JOHN:** Yeah, they have a big dinner down in Ladysmith.

[01:12:39] **RON:** Yes, I've been twice. I thought, you know, we found the graves of the Seattle longshoremen, and so we asked the church that looked after this deserted cemetery, and they didn't. It turns out that in the congregation is Bill, and I can't think of his last name. Wonderful man. You know what he did? He cleaned up that cemetery and put a fence around it. It looks just prosperous now.

[01:13:20] **JOHN:** There is longshoremen buried in that cemetery up there. It's called the Mission Indian Reserve Cemetery. There's longshoremen there, but it's not a plot or an area, it's integrated with the whole graveyard.

[01:13:37] **RON:** Yeah, these six longshoremen are buried with 175 coal miners.

[01:13:44] **JOHN:** Oh, yeah. That's when Whatshisname was killed in . . . what the hell, I just read the book again. I'm getting senile.

[01:13:59] **RON:** They kept mining that thing and it kept exploding.

[01:14:03] **JOHN:** Yeah.

[01:14:04] **RON:** That was unbelievable.

[01:14:09] **JOHN:** Cumberland, wasn't it?

[01:14:10] **RON:** Yes, yes!

[01:14:15] **CONOR:** Ginger Goodwin.

[01:14:16] **JOHN:** That's a good memory. You read the book.

[01:14:17] **RON:** I've got the shirt.

[01:14:22] **JOHN:** Have you?

[01:14:22] **RON:** Yeah, I have.

[01:14:25] **HARVEY:** John, do you have any last comment you'd like to make, like looking back or wrapping up?

[01:14:33] **JOHN:** I'd just say one thing. I said this to the convention in the year Harry retired, and I said this again. "I owe the health of my family, and their education, and my way of life, my standard of living, all due to my education that they gave me from the International Union." Which the leader was Harry and Lou and the rest of the International officers. They did that. They taught me. That was one. And I guess I've just about paid them back now so we're about even. It wasn't free. I wasn't an intellect or something like that, so they taught me. I watched and copied them and listened, learned how to negotiate and the rest of it with them. Harry was always that. I've got one quality same as Harry, I can't pick a good horse to win either. [laughter]

[01:15:38] **RON:** What an epitaph! That's great.

[01:15:46] **JOHN:** He loved to come up there and go to the races. He was a wonderful man. I don't know what kind of a life he led, but he'd cross his legs—skinny sucker—I don't know how he ever existed. Didn't eat. Drink a bottle of beer, that would be enough. I never seen him to take any booze. And then all the trouble in the family, too, and in Hawaii.

The Hawaiians and us are very close. But that's what made you the ILWU. It's the International. I told the convention that. I said, "The only reason you got that ILWU is because of the Canadians, because we're making an International Union." [laughter] That's not the truth anymore because now we have the Panamanian pilots.

[01:16:44] **RON:** But Harry had great dreams. That was the point.

[01:16:50] **JOHN:** Oh, yeah. Sometimes a little far-fetched. You know, he wasn't afraid to say when you were wrong. That used to happen. Local 13 had a lot of struggles, boy. That was like our sister local. They were very good to us, Local 13, and Tacoma here. Well, we were good to the Bellingham local. We used to take them up there and put them to work. Some guy got his fingers in the pie or something like that down in Local 113, we hid him up in Squamish. [laughter] So it all worked out fine.

[01:17:34] **RON:** Harry did a lot of that.

[01:17:35] **JOHN:** Yeah. And Goldblatt, I've got to tell you, Lou and I were very close. He was another one. They came to a misunderstanding of some sort, and I don't know the ramifications.

[01:17:52] **HARVEY:** How did you deal with that? If you were friends with both Lou and Harry, how did you deal with the situation?

[01:17:57] **JOHN:** Tough. I had to choose in the end. I had to. And I went with Harry.

[01:18:03] **HARVEY:** What made you have to choose?

[01:18:05] **JOHN:** Well, I heard the affiliation of the Teamsters with us. I heard there was some inklings of someday merging with the Teamsters. I wasn't too happy with them up in Canada. We had trouble with them up there. We had trouble with the employer. The employer didn't send the Maritime Employers rep down to the dock. He sends the business agent from the Teamsters. [laughter]

[01:18:37] **HARVEY:** Bridges was favoring the idea possibly in the 70s of a merger with the Teamsters, and so what made it that you had to choose to go with Harry's position, even though you didn't think the Teamsters were the most wonderful folks in the world?

[01:18:57] **JOHN:** Well, I didn't want to be affiliated with the Teamsters.

[01:19:01] **HARVEY:** But Bridges was looking in that direction.

[01:19:04] **JOHN:** No, I don't think so. I have a different opinion. Lou was. Didn't that cause—you'd be more up to me than I know. All I can tell you that I understood—

[01:19:17] **HARVEY:** I think the break, the difficulties between the two predated Bridges's looking toward affiliation with either the ILA [International Longshoremen's Association] or the Teamsters in the early 70s.

[01:19:28] **JOHN:** I met that ILA president in Hawaii. I met him once. I was in the elevator with him. They do their own thing but what the hell. We make our mistakes, too.

[01:19:44] **HARVEY:** Yeah. But you decided to stay more inclined toward Harry?

[01:19:48] **JOHN:** Yeah, yeah. Lou was a man of few words, you know, and when he spoke, everybody listened. He was a very brilliant person, and the hardest nut to crack would be that warehouse work, you know, the Colgates and the rest of that, went through all those strikes, and Lou kept that under control there. I had nothing but admiration. I still have today for him. But when it came to the longshore, when the big locals started—'Frisco Local 10 and 13—they started to go with Harry on the coast committee, well, that's when—we didn't have anything to do with it up there. We didn't vote on it anyway.

[01:20:34] **HARVEY:** Maybe what I'm thinking, Goldblatt in around 1960 led a movement toward bargaining along with the Teamsters. Maybe that's what you responded to.

[01:20:51] **JOHN:** That's happened, too, in the towboat industry up in Canada, in Vancouver proper, we had two unions. We had the SIU [Seafarers International Union] and we had the CBRT [Canadian Brotherhood of Railway Transport and General Workers]. The CBRT is one of our members of the International. They had a hell of a fight up there. It's all settled nowadays. They're all kissing and getting [unintelligible] SIU. The guy we used to sit across the table from was the guy Hal Banks brought into Canada to break the goddamn Seamen's Union. Norm Cunningham—they call him "Bicycle Chains"—the guy's a gangster.

[01:21:29] **RON:** Yeah, I remember that.

[01:21:35] **JOHN:** They've got control of—so I understand. I shouldn't say that because I've never seen any document—but they are prominent in the Beverage Dispensers Union. Bartenders and hotel workers. Well, [Jack] Hall had the same trouble in Hawaii with them, with the Teamsters. That's how he went to the other islands, but he still got some hotels, I think, right in Waikiki.

[01:22:02] **HARVEY:** ILWU has the outer islands in Hawaii.

[01:22:06] **JOHN:** Yeah, but I think he's got one or two somewhere in Oahu, too, I think.

[01:22:11] **HARVEY:** "Us," that is to say the ILWU?

[01:22:13] **JOHN:** Yeah.

[01:22:16] **RON:** The Teamsters.

[01:22:17] **JOHN:** Teamsters got it all in Hawaii.

[01:22:23] **HARVEY:** The deal was they would have Honolulu and Oahu and the outer islands were the ILWU Hotels, yeah.

[01:22:30] **JOHN:** John Arizumi, I don't know if you've ever run into him—he was the International rep from Maui.

[01:22:35] **HARVEY:** Don't know him.

[01:22:36] **JOHN:** He organized—you really don't?

[01:22:38] **HARVEY:** I don't know him, no.

[01:22:41] **JOHN:** Japanese fellow. He organized that King Kamehameha Hotel in Kona.

[01:22:48] **RON:** Yeah.

[01:22:49] **JOHN:** Twelve hundred people! "How the hell did you do that, John?" [laughter] We were drinking some Crown Royal and I said, "You ain't that smart." And he still had a hat; he always wears a hat. He says, "Well, sometimes, you know, I'd do anything to get the certification. Sometimes I have to sleep with her, and sometimes I have to sleep with him." [laughter] He's pulling my leg, eh? He's pulling my leg! Yeah, John Arizumi.

[01:23:30] **HARVEY:** We'd better close it off before the maid comes and jumps in bed. [laughter]

[01:23:38] **JOHN:** It's been a pleasure. If I helped you—

[01:23:40] **HARVEY:** Oh, you did. Thanks very much, John.

[01:23:44] **JOHN:** I can't promise anything immediate, but when I go to clean up that graveyard of my grandfather's--